MUNSEY

USE COMMON SENSE

BY ELLIS PARKER BUTLER

HIS FUNNIEST STORY SINCE

"PIGS IS PIGS"

THE SHOCK ABSORBER

THE STORY OF A BORROWED BRIDE

BY LEIGH GORDON GILTNER

THE LAND OF TURMOIL

BY WILLIAM SLAVENS McNUTT

BEGINS IN THIS ISSUE

JULY

PRICE 25 CENTS

The Girl from Hollywood*

A MODERN DRAMA OF CITY AND COUNTRY LIFE IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

By Edgar Rice Burroughs

Author of "Tarzan of the Apes," "A Princess of Mars," etc.

IN the foothills of the southern California mountains are the Rancho del Ganado, owned by Colonel Pennington, a Virginian of wealth and good family, and a smaller ranch on which Mrs. Evans, a widow, lives with her daughter Grace and her son Guy. Custer Pennington, the colonel's son, is engaged to Grace Evans, but the girl feels that she has dramatic talent, and before settling down to married life in the country she is determined to make a bid for fame as a motion picture actress.

There is also a boy and girl engagement between Eva Pennington, Custer's sister, and Guy Evans. In his eagerness to get money that will enable him to marry, young Evans has become involved in the schemes of Slick Allen, a discharged hand of the Ganado ranch, who is selling whisky stolen from a government warehouse.

Another neighbor of the Penningtons is Mrs. Burke, whose daughter, known professionally as Gaza de Lure, is in Los Angeles, playing small parts in film dramas. A clever and beautiful girl, Gaza attracts the attention of Wilson Crumb, an actor-director of some prominence, who treacherously tricks her into the morphine habit.

VIII

BENEATH the cool shadows of the north porch the master of Ganado, booted and spurred, rested after a long ride in the hot sun, sipping a long, cool glass of peach brandy and orange juice, and talking with his wife. A broad barley field lay below them, stretching to the State highway half a mile to the north. The yellowing heads of the grain stood motionless beneath the blazing sun. Inside the myriad kernels the milk was changing into dough. It would not be long now, barring fogs, before that gorgeous pageant of prosperity would be falling in serried columns into the maw of the binder.

"We're going to have a bully crop of barley this year, Julia," remarked the colonel, fishing a small piece of ice from his glass. "Do you know, I'm beginning to believe this is better than a mint julep!"

"Heavens, Custer—whisper it!" admonished his wife. "Just suppose the shades of some of your ancestors, or mine, should overhear such sacrilege!"

The colonel chuckled.

"Is it old age, or has this sunny land made me effeminate?" he queried. "It's quite a far cry from an old-fashioned mint julep to this home-made wine and orange juice. You can't call it brandy—it hasn't enough of what the boys call 'kick' to be entitled to that honor; but I like it. Yes, sir, that's bully barley—there isn't any better in the foothills!"

"The oats look good, too," said Mrs. Pennington. "I haven't noticed the slightest sign of rust."

"That's the result of the boy's trip to Texas last summer," said the colonel proudly. "Went down there himself and selected all the seed—didn't take anybody's word for it. Genuine Texas rustproof oats was what he went for and what he got. I don't know what I'd do without him, Julia. It's wonderful to see one's dreams come true! I've been dreaming for years of the time when my boy and I would work together and make Ganado even more wonderful than it ever was before; and now my dream's a reality. It's great, I tell you—it's great! Is there another glass of this Ganado elixir in that pitcher, Julia?"

They were silent then for a few minutes, the colonel sipping his "elixir," and Mrs. Pennington, with her book face down upon her lap, gazing out across the barley and

* Copyright, 1922, by Edgar Rice Burroughs—This story began in the June number of MUNSEY'S MAGAZINE

the broad valley and the distant hills—into the future, perhaps, or back into the past.

It had been an ideal life that they had led here—a life of love and sunshine and happiness. There had been nothing to vex her soul as she reveled in the delight of her babies, watching them grow into sturdy children and then develop into clean young manhood and womanhood. But growing with the passing years had been the dread of that day when the first break would come, as come she knew it must.

She knew the dream that her husband had built, and that with it he had purposely blinded his eyes and dulled his ears to the truth which the mother heart would have been glad to deny, but could not. Some day one of the children would go away, and then the other. It was only right and just that it should be so, for as they two had built their own home and their own lives and their little family circle, so their children must do even as they.

It was going to be hard on them both, but much harder on the father, because of that dream that had become an obsession. Mrs. Pennington feared that it might break his spirit, for it would leave him nothing to plan for and hope for as he had planned and hoped for this during the twenty-two years that they had spent upon Ganado.

Now that Grace was going to the city, how could they hope to keep their boy content upon the ranch? She knew he loved the old place, but he was entitled to see the world and to make his own place in it—not merely to slide spinelessly into the niche that another had prepared for him.

"I am worried about the boy," she said presently.

"How? In what way?" he asked.

"He will be very blue and lonely after Grace goes," she said.

"Don't talk to me about it!" cried the colonel, banging his glass down upon the table and rising to his feet. "It makes me mad just to think of it. I can't understand how Grace can want to leave this beautiful world to live in a damned city! She's crazy! What's her mother thinking about, to let her go?"

"You must remember, dear," said his wife soothingly, "that every one is not so much in love with the country as you, and that these young people have their own careers to carve in the way they think best. It would not be right to try to force them to live the way we like to live."

"Damned foolishness, that's what it is!" he blustered. "An actress! What does she know about acting?"

"She is beautiful, cultured, and intelligent. There is no reason why she should not succeed and make a great name for herself. Why shouldn't she be ambitious, dear? We should encourage her, now that she has determined to go. It would help her, for she loves us all—she loves you as a daughter might, for you have been like a father to her ever since Mr. Evans died."

"Oh, pshaw, Julia!" the colonel exclaimed. "I love Grace—you know I do. I suppose it's because I love her that I feel so about this. Maybe I'm jealous of the city, to think that it has weaned her away from us. I don't mean all I say, sometimes; but really I am broken up at the thought of her going. It seems to me that it may be just the beginning of the end of the beautiful life that we have all led here for so many years."

"Have you ever thought that some day our own children may want to go?" she asked.

"I won't think about it!" he exploded.

"I hope you won't have to," she said; "but it's going to be pretty hard on the boy after Grace goes."

"Do you think he'll want to go?" the colonel asked. His voice sounded suddenly strange and pleading, and there was a suggestion of pain and fear in his eyes that she had never seen there before in all the years that she had known him. "Do you think he'll want to go?" he repeated in a voice that no longer sounded like his own.

"Stranger things have happened," she replied, forcing a smile, "than a young man wanting to go out into the world and win his spurs!"

"Let's not talk about it, Julia," the colonel said presently. "You are right, but I don't want to think about it. When it comes will be time enough to meet it. If my boy wants to go, he shall go—and he shall never know how deeply his father is hurt!"

"There they are now," said Mrs. Pennington. "I hear them in the patio. Children!" she called. "Here we are on the north porch!"

They came through the house together, brother and sister, their arms about each other.

"Cus says I am too young to get married," exclaimed the girl.

"Married!" ejaculated the colonel. "You and Guy talking of getting married? What you going to live on, child?"

"On that hill back there."

She jerked her thumb in a direction that was broadly south by west.

"That will give them two things to live on," suggested the boy, grinning.

"What do you mean—two things?" demanded the girl.

"The hill and father," her brother replied, dodging.

She pursued him, and he ran behind his mother's chair; but at last she caught him, and, seizing his collar, pretended to chastise him, until he picked her bodily from the floor and kissed her.

"Pity the poor goof she ensnares!" pleaded Custer, addressing his parents. "He will have three avenues of escape—being beaten to death, starved to death, or talked to death."

Eva clapped a hand over his mouth.

"Now listen to me," she cried. "Guy and I are going to build a teeny, weeny bungalow on that hill, all by ourselves, with a white tile splash board in the kitchen, and one of those broom closets that turn into an ironing board, and a very low, overhanging roof, almost flat, and a shower, and a great big living room where we can take the rugs up and dance, and a spiffy little garden in the back yard, and chickens, and Chinese rugs, and he is going to have a study all to himself where he writes his stories, and—"

At last she had to stop and join in the laughter.

"I think you are all mean," she added. "You always laugh at me!"

"With you, little jabberer," corrected the colonel; "for you were made to be laughed with and kissed."

"Then kiss me," she exclaimed, and sprang into his lap, at the imminent risk of deluging them both with "elixir"—a risk which the colonel, through long experience of this little daughter of his, was able to minimize by holding the glass at arm's length as she dived for him.

"And when are you going to be married?" he asked.

"Oh, not for ages and ages!" she cried.

"But are you and Guy engaged?"

"Of course not!"

"Then why in the world all this talk about getting married?" he inquired, his eyes twinkling.

"Well, can't I talk?" she demanded.

"Talk? I'll say she can!" exclaimed her brother.

IX

Two weeks later Grace Evans left for Hollywood and fame. She would permit no one to accompany her, saying that she wanted to feel that from the moment she left home she had made her own way, unassisted, toward her goal.

Hers was the selfish egotism that is often to be found in otherwise generous natures. She had never learned the sweetness and beauty of sharing—of sharing her ambitions, her successes, and her failures, too, with those who loved her. If she won to fame, the glory would be hers; nor did it once occur to her that she might have shared that pride and pleasure with others by accepting their help and advice. If she failed, they would not have even the sad sweetness of sharing her disappointment.

Over two homes there hovered that evening a pall of gloom that no effort seemed able to dispel. In the ranch house on Ganado they made a brave effort at cheerfulness on Custer Pennington's account. They did not dance that evening, as was their custom, nor could they find pleasure in the printed page when they tried to read. Bridge proved equally impossible.

Finally Custer rose, announcing that he was going to bed. Kissing them all good night, as had been the custom since childhood, he went to his room, and tears came to the mother's eyes as she noted the droop in the broad shoulders as he walked from the room.

The girl came then and knelt beside her, taking the older woman's hand in hers and caressing it.

"I feel so sorry for Cus," she said. "I believe that none of us realize how hard he is taking this. He told me yesterday that it was going to be just the same as if Grace was dead, for he knew she would never be satisfied here again, whether she succeeded or failed. I think he has definitely given up all hope of their being married."

"Oh, no, dear, I am sure he is wrong," said her mother. "The engagement has not been broken. In fact Grace told me only a few days ago that she hoped her success would come quickly, so that she and Custer might be married the sooner. The dear girl wants us to be proud of our new daughter."

"My God!" ejaculated the colonel, throwing his book down and rising to pace the floor. "Proud of her! Weren't we already proud of her? Will being an actress make her any dearer to us? Of all the damn fool ideas!"

"Custer! Custer! You mustn't swear so before Eva," reproved Mrs. Pennington.

"Swear?" he demanded. "Who in hell is swearing?"

A merry peal of laughter broke from the girl, nor could her mother refrain from smiling.

"It isn't swearing when popsy says it," cried the girl. "My gracious, I've heard it all my life, and you always say the same thing to him, as if I'd never heard a single little cuss word. Anyway, I'm going to bed now, popsy, so that you won't contaminate me. According to momsy's theory she should curse like a pirate by this time, after twenty-five years of it!"

She kissed them, leaving them alone in the little family sitting room.

"I hope the boy won't take it too hard," said the colonel after a silence.

"I am afraid he has been drinking a little too much lately," said the mother. "I only hope his loneliness for Grace won't encourage it."

"I hadn't noticed it," said the colonel.

"He never shows it much," she replied. "An outsider would not know that he had been drinking at all when I can see that he has had more than he should."

"Don't worry about that, dear," said the colonel. "A Pennington never drinks more than a gentleman should. His father and his grandsires, on both sides, always drank, but there has never been a drunkard in either family. I wouldn't give two cents for him if he couldn't take a man's drink like a man; but he'll never go too far. My boy couldn't!"

The pride and affection in the words brought the tears to the mother's eyes. She wondered if there had ever been father and son like these before—each with such implicit confidence in the honor, the integrity, and the manly strength of the other. *His boy* couldn't go wrong!

Custer Pennington entered his room, lighted a reading lamp beside a deep, wide-armed chair, selected a book from a rack, and settled himself comfortably for an hour of pleasure and inspiration. But he did not open the book. Instead, he sat staring blindly at the opposite wall.

Directly in front of him hung a water color of the Apache, done by Eva, and given to him the previous Christmas; a framed enlargement of a photograph of a prize Hereford bull; a pair of rusty Spanish spurs; and a frame of ribbons won by the Apache at various horse shows. Custer saw none of these, but only a gloomy vista of dreary years stretching through the dead monotony of endless ranch days that were all alike—years that he must travel alone.

She would never come back, and why should she? In the city, in that new life, she would meet men of the world—men of broader culture than his, men of wealth—and she would be sought after. They would have more to offer her than he, and sooner or later she would realize it. He could not expect to hold her.

Custer laid aside his book.

"What's the use?" he asked himself.

Rising, he went to the closet and brought out a bottle. He had not intended drinking. On the contrary, he had determined very definitely not to drink that night; but again he asked himself the old question which, under certain circumstances of life and certain conditions of seeming hopelessness, appears unanswerable:

"What is the use?"

It is a foolish question, a meaningless question, a dangerous question. What is the use of what? Of combating fate—of declining to do the thing we ought not to do—of doing the thing we should do? It is not even a satisfactory means of self-justification; but amid the ruins of his dreams it was sufficient excuse for Custer Pennington's surrender to the craving of an appetite which was daily becoming stronger.

The next morning he did not ride before breakfast with the other members of the family, nor, in fact, did he breakfast until long after they.

On the evening of the day of Grace's departure Mrs. Evans retired early, complaining of a headache. Guy Evans sought to interest himself in various magazines, but he was restless and too ill at ease to remain long absorbed. At frequent intervals he consulted his watch, and as the evening wore on he made numerous trips to his room, where he had recourse to a bottle like the one with which Custer Pennington was similarly engaged.

It was Friday—the second Friday since Guy had entered into an agreement with Allen; and as midnight approached his nervousness increased.

Young Evans, while scarcely to be classed as a strong character, was more impulsive than weak, nor was he in any sense of the word vicious. While he knew that he was breaking the law, he would have been terribly shocked at the merest suggestion that his acts placed upon him the brand of criminality. Like many another, he considered the Volstead Act the work of an organized and meddlesome minority, rather than the real will of the people. There was, in his opinion, no immorality in circumventing the Eighteenth Amendment whenever and wherever possible.

The only fly in the ointment was the fact that the liquor in which he was at present trafficking had been stolen; but he attempted to square this with his conscience by the oft reiterated thought that he did not know it to be stolen goods—they couldn't prove that he knew it. However, the fly remained. It must have been one of those extremely obnoxious, buzzy flies, if one might judge by the boy's increasing nervousness.

Time and again, during that long evening, he mentally reiterated his determination that once this venture was concluded, he would never embark upon another of a similar nature. The several thousand dollars which it would net him would make it possible for him to marry Eva and settle down to a serious and uninterrupted effort at writing—the one vocation for which he believed himself best fitted by inclination and preparation; but never again, he assured himself repeatedly, would he allow himself to be cajoled or threatened into such an agreement.

He disliked and feared Allen, whom he now knew to be a totally unscrupulous man, and his introduction, the preceding Friday, to the confederates who had brought down the first consignment of whisky from the mountains had left him fairly frozen with apprehension as he considered the type of ruffians with whom he was associated. During the intervening week he had been unable to concentrate his mind upon his story writing even to the extent of a single word of new material. He had worried and brooded, and he had drunk more than usual.

As he sat waiting for the arrival of the second consignment, he pictured the little cavalcade winding downward along hidden trails through the chaparral of dark, mountain ravines. His nervousness increased as he realized the risk of discovery some time during the six months that it would take to move the contraband to the edge of the valley in this way—thirty-six cases at a time, packed out on six burros.

He had little fear of the failure of his plan for hiding the liquor in the old hay barn and moving it out again the following day. For three years there had been stored in one end of the barn some fifty tons of baled melilotus. It had been sown as a cover crop by a former foreman, and allowed to grow to such proportions as to render the plowing of it under a practical impossibility. As hay it was in little or no demand, but there was a possibility of a hay shortage that year. It was against this possibility that Evans had had it baled and stored away in the barn, where it had lain ever since, awaiting an offer that would at least cover the cost of growing, harvesting, and baling. A hard day's work had so rearranged the bales as to form a hidden chamber in the center of the pile, ingress to which could readily be had by removing a couple of bales near the floor.

A little after eleven o'clock Guy left the house and made his way to the hay barn, where he paced nervously to and fro in the dark interior. He hoped that the men would come early and get the thing over, for it was this part of the operation that seemed most fraught with danger.

The disposal of the liquor was effected by daylight, and the very boldness and simplicity of the scheme seemed to assure its safety. A large motor truck—such trucks are constantly seen upon the roads of southern California, loaded with farm and orchard products and bound cityward—drove up to the hay barn on the morning after the receipt of the contraband. It backed into the interior, and half an hour later it emerged with a small load of baled melilotus. That there were thirty-six cases of bonded whisky concealed by the innocent-looking bales of melilotus Mr. Volstead himself could not have guessed; but such was the case.

Where it went to after it left his hands Guy Evans did not know or want to know. The man who bought it from him owned and drove the truck. He paid Evans six dollars a quart in currency, and drove

away, taking, besides the load on the floor of the truck, a much heavier burden from the mind of the young man.

The whisky was in Guy's possession for less than twelve hours a week; but during those twelve hours he earned the commission of a dollar a bottle that Allen allowed him, for his great fear was that sooner or later some one would discover and follow the six burros as they came down to the barn. There were often campers in the hills. During the deer season, if they did not have it all removed by that time, they would be almost certain of discovery, since every courageous ribbon counter clerk in Los Angeles hied valiantly to the mountains with a high-powered rifle, to track the ferocious deer to its lair.

At a quarter past twelve Evans heard the sounds for which he had been so expectantly waiting. He opened a small door in the end of the hay barn, through which there filed in silence six burdened burros, led by one swarthy Mexican and followed by another. Quietly the men unpacked the burros and stored the thirty-six cases in the chamber beneath the hay. Inside this same chamber, by the light of a flash lamp, Evans counted out to one of them the proceeds from the sale of the previous week. The whole transaction consumed less than half an hour, and was carried on with the exchange of less than a dozen words. As silently as they had come the men departed, with their burros, into the darkness toward the hills, and young Evans made his way to his room and to bed.

X

As the weeks passed, the routine of ranch life weighed more and more heavily on Custer Pennington. The dull monotony of it took the zest from the things that he had formerly regarded as the pleasures of existence. The buoyant Apache no longer had power to thrill. The long rides were but obnoxious duties to be performed. The hills had lost their beauty.

Custer attributed his despondency to an unkind fate that had thwarted his ambitions. He thought that he hated Ganado; and he thought, too—he honestly thought—that freedom to battle for success in the heart of some great city would bring happiness and content. For all that, he performed his duties and bore himself as cheerfully as ever before the other members of his family, though his mother and sister saw that when he thought he was alone and unobserved he often sat with drooping shoulders, staring at the ground, in an attitude of dejection which their love could scarce misinterpret.

The frequent letters that came from Grace during her first days in Hollywood had breathed a spirit of hopefulness and enthusiasm that might have proven contagious, but for the fact that he saw in her success a longer and probably a permanent separation. If she should be speedily discouraged, she might return to the foothills and put the idea of a career forever from her mind; but if she received even the slightest encouragement, Custer was confident that nothing could wean her from her ambition. He was the more sure of this because in his own mind he could picture no inducement sufficiently powerful to attract any one to return to the humdrum existence of the ranch. Better be a failure in the midst of life, he put it to himself, than a success in the unpeopled spaces of its outer edge.

Ensuing weeks brought fewer letters, and there was less of enthusiasm, though hope was still unquenched. She had not yet met the right people, Grace said, and there was a general depression in the entire picture industry. Universal had a new manager, and there was no guessing what his policy would be; Goldwyn had laid off half their force; Robertson-Cole had shut down. She was sure, though, that things would brighten up later, and that she would have her chance. Would they please tell her how Senator was, and give him her love, and kiss the Apache for her? There was just a note, perhaps, of homesickness in some of her letters; and gradually they became fewer and shorter.

The little gatherings of the neighbors at Ganado continued. Other young people of the valley and the foothills came and danced, or swam, or played tennis. Their elders came, too, equally enjoying the hospitality of the Penningtons; and among these was the new owner of the little orchard beyond the Evans ranch.

The Penningtons had found Mrs. Burke a quiet woman of refined tastes, and the possessor of a quiet humor that made her always a welcome addition to the family circle. That she had known more of sorrow than of happiness was evidenced in many ways, but that she had risen above the petty selfishness of grief was strikingly

apparent in her thoughtfulness for others, her quick sympathy, and the kindliness of her humor. Whatever ills fate had brought her, they had not left her soured.

As she came oftener, and came to know the Penningtons better, she depended more and more on the colonel for advice in matters pertaining to her orchard and her finances. Of personal matters she never spoke. They knew that she had a daughter living in Los Angeles; but of the girl they knew nothing, for deep in the heart of Mrs. George Burke, who had been born Charity Cooper, was a strain of Puritanism that could not look with aught but horror upon the stage and its naughty little sister, the screen—though in her letters to that loved daughter there was no suggestion of the pain that the fond heart held because of the career the girl had chosen.

Charity Cooper's youth had been so surrounded by restrictions that at eighteen she was as unsophisticated as a child of twelve. As a result, she had easily succumbed to the blandishments of an unscrupulous young Irish adventurer, who had thought that her fine family connections indicated wealth. When he learned the contrary, shortly after their marriage, he promptly deserted her, nor had she seen or heard aught of him since. Of him she never spoke, and of course the Penningtons never questioned her.

At thirty-nine Mrs. George Burke still retained much of the frail and delicate beauty that had been hers in girlhood. The effort of moving from her old home and settling the new, followed by the responsibilities of the unfamiliar and highly technical activities of orange culture, had drawn heavily upon her always inadequate vitality. As the Penningtons became better acquainted with her, they began to feel real concern as to her physical condition; and this concern was not lessened by the knowledge that she had been giving the matter serious thought, as was evidenced by her request that the colonel would permit her to name him as executor of her estate in a will that she was making.

While life upon Ganado took its peaceful way, outwardly unruffled, the girl whose image was in the hearts of them all strove valiantly in the face of recurring disappointment toward the high goal upon which her eyes were set.

If she could only have a chance! How often that half prayer, half cry of anguish, was in the silent voicing of her thoughts! If she could only have a chance!

In the weeks of tramping from studio to studio she had learned much. For one thing, she had come to know the ruthlessness of a certain type of man that must and will some day be driven from the industry—that is, in fact, even now being driven out, though slowly, by the stress of public opinion and by the example of the men of finer character who are gradually making a higher code of ethics for the studios.

She had learned even more from the scores of chance acquaintances who, through repeated meetings in the outer offices of casting directors, had become almost friends. Indeed, when she found herself facing the actuality of one of the more repulsive phases of studio procedure, it appeared more in the guise of habitude through the many references to it that she had heard from the lips of her more experienced fellows.

She was interviewing, for the dozenth time, the casting director of the K. K. S. Studio, who had come to know her by sight, and perhaps to feel a little compassion for her—though there are those who will tell you that casting directors, having no hearts, can never experience so human an emotion as compassion.

"I'm sorry, Miss Evans," he said; "but I haven't a thing for you to-day." As she turned away, he raised his hand. "Wait!" he said. "Mr. Crumb is casting his new picture himself. He's out on the lot now. Go out and see him—he might be able to use you."

The girl thanked him and made her way from the office building in search of Crumb. She stepped over light cables and picked her way across stages that were littered with the heterogeneous jumble of countless interior sets. She dodged the assistants of a frantic technical director who was attempting to transform an African water hole into a Roman bath in an hour and forty-five minutes. She bumped against a heavy shipping crate, through the iron-barred end of which a savage lioness growled and struck at her. Finally she discovered a single individual who seemed to have nothing to do, and who therefore might be approached with a query as to where Mr. Crumb might be found. This resplendent idler directed her to an Algerian street set behind the stages, and as he spoke she recognized him as the leading

male star of the organization, the highest-salaried person on the lot.

A few minutes later she found the man she sought. She had never seen Wilson Crumb before, and her first impression was a pleasant one, for he was courteous and affable. She told him that she had been to the casting director, and that he had said that Mr. Crumb might be able to use her. As she spoke, the man watched her intently, his eyes running quickly over her figure without suggestion of offense.

"What experience have you had?" he asked.

"Just a few times as an extra," she replied.

He shook his head.

"I am afraid I can't use you," he said; "unless"—he hesitated—"unless you would care to work in the seminude, which would necessitate making a test—in the nude."

He waited for her reply. Grace Evans gulped. She could feel a scarlet flush mounting rapidly until it suffused her entire face. She could not understand why it was necessary to try her out in any less garmenture than would pass the censors; but then that is something which no one can understand.

Here, possibly, was her opportunity. She had read in the papers that Wilson Crumb was preparing to make the greatest picture of his career. She thought of her constant prayer for a chance. Here was a chance, and yet she hesitated. The brutal, useless condition he had imposed outraged every instinct of decency and refinement inherent in her, just as it has outraged the same characteristics in countless other girls—just as it is doing in other studios in all parts of the country every day.

"Is that absolutely essential?" she asked.

"Quite so," he replied.

Still she hesitated. Her chance! If she let it pass, she might as well pack up and return home. What a little thing to do, after all, when one really considered it! It was purely professional. There would be nothing personal in it, if she could only succeed in overcoming her self-consciousness; but *could* she do it?

Again she thought of home. A hundred times, of late, she had wished that she was back there; but she did not want to go back a failure. It was that which decided her.

"Very well," she said; "but there will not be many there, will there?"

"Only a camera man and myself," he replied. "If it is convenient, I can arrange it immediately."

Two hours later Grace Evans left the K. K. S. lot. She was to start work on the morrow at fifty dollars a week for the full period of the picture. Wilson Crumb had told her that she had a wonderful future, and that she was fortunate to have fallen in with a director who could make a great star of her. As she went, she left behind all her self-respect and part of her natural modesty.

Wilson Crumb, watching her go, rubbed the ball of his right thumb to and fro across the back of his left hand, and smiled.

The Apache danced along the wagon trail that led back into the hills. He tugged at the bit and tossed his head impatiently, flecking his rider's shirt with foam. He lifted his feet high and twisted and wriggled like an eel. He wanted to be off, and he wondered what had come over his old pal that there were no more swift, gay gallops, and that washes were crossed sedately by way of their gravelly bottoms, instead of being taken with a flying leap.

Presently he cocked an eye ahead, as if in search of something. A moment later he leaped suddenly sidewise, snorting in apparent terror.

"You old fool!" said Pennington affectionately.

The horse had shied at a large white bowlder lying beside the wagon trail. For nearly three years he had shied at it religiously every time he had passed it. Long before they reached it he always looked ahead to see if it was still there, and he would have been terribly disappointed had it been missing. The man always knew that the horse was going to shy—he would have been disappointed if the Apache had not played this little game of make-believe. To carry the game to its conclusion, the rider should gather him and force him, snorting and trembling, right up to the bowlder, talking to him coaxingly and stroking his arched neck, but at the same time not neglecting to press the spurs against his glossy sides if he hesitated.

The Apache loved it. He loved the power that was his as exemplified by the quick, wide leap aside, and he loved the power of the man to force his nose to the bowlder—the power that gave him such confidence in his rider that he would go

wherever he was asked to go; but to-day he was disappointed. His pal did not force him to the bowlder. Instead, Custer Pennington merely reined him into the trail again beyond it and rode on up Jackknife Cañon.

Custer was looking over the pasture. It was late July. The hills were no longer green, except where their sides and summits were clothed with chaparral. The lower hills were browning beneath the hot summer sun, but they were still beautiful, dotted as they were with walnut and live oak.

As Pennington rode, he recalled the last time he had ridden through Jackknife with Grace. She had been gone two months now—it seemed as many years. She no longer wrote often, and when she did write her letters were short and unsatisfying. He recalled all the incidents of that last ride, and they reminded him again of the new-made trail they had discovered, and of his oft repeated intention of following it to see where it led. He had never had the time—he did not have the time to-day. The heifers with their calves were still in this pasture. He counted them, examined the condition of the feed, and rode back to the house.

It was Friday. From a hill beyond Jackknife a man had watched through binoculars his every move. Three other men had been waiting below the watcher along the new-made trail. It was well for Pennington that he had not chosen that day to investigate.

After he had turned back toward the ranch, the man with the binoculars descended to the others.

"It was young Pennington," he said. The speaker was Allen. "I was thinking that it would be a fool trick to kill him, unless we have to. I have a better scheme. Listen—if he ever learns anything that he shouldn't know, this is what you are to do, if I am away."

Very carefully and in great detail he elaborated his plan.

"Do you understand?" he asked.

They did, and they grinned.

The following night, after the Penningtons had dined, a ranch hand came up from Mrs. Burke's to tell them that their new neighbor was quite ill, and that the woman who did her housework wanted Mrs. Pennington to come down, as she was worried about her mistress.

"We will be right down," said Colonel Pennington.

They found Mrs. Burke breathing with difficulty, and the colonel immediately telephoned for a local doctor. After the physician had examined her, he came to them in the living room.

"You had better send for Jones, of Los Angeles," he said. "It is her heart. I can do nothing. I doubt if he can; but he is a specialist. And," he added, "if she has any near relatives, I think I should notify them—at once."

The housekeeper had joined them, and was wiping tears from her face with her apron.

"She has a daughter in Los Angeles," said the colonel; "but we do not know her address."

"She wrote her to-day, just before this spell," said the housekeeper. "The letter hasn't been mailed yet—here it is."

She picked it up from the center table and handed it to the colonel.

"'Miss Shannon Burke, 1580 Panizo Circle, Hollywood,'" he read. "I will take the responsibility of wiring both Miss Burke and Dr. Jones. Can you get a good nurse locally?"

The doctor could, and so it was arranged.

XI

GAZA DE LURE was sitting at the piano when Crumb arrived at the bungalow at 1421 Vista del Paso at a little after six in the evening of the last Saturday in July. The smoke from a half burned cigarette lying on the ebony case was rising in a thin, indolent column above the masses of her black hair. Her fingers idled through a dreamy waltz.

Crumb gave her a surly nod as he closed the door behind him. He was tired and cross after a hard day at the studio. The girl, knowing that he would be all right presently, merely returned his nod and continued playing. He went immediately to his room, and a moment later she heard him enter the bathroom through another doorway.

Half an hour later he emerged, shaved, spruce, and smiling. A tiny powder had effected a transformation, just as she had known that it would. He came and leaned across the piano, close to her. She was very beautiful. It seemed to the man that she grew more beautiful and more desirable each day. The fact that she had been un-

attainable had fed the fires of his desire, transforming infatuation into as near a thing to love as a man of his type can ever feel.

"Well, little girl!" he cried gayly. "I have good news for you."

She smiled a crooked little smile and shook her head.

"The only good news that I can think of would be that the government had established a comfortable home for superannuated hop-heads, where they would be furnished, without cost, with all the snow they could use."

The effects of her last shot were wearing off. He laughed good-naturedly.

"Really," he insisted; "on the level, I've got the best news you've heard in moons."

"Well?" she asked wearily.

"Old Battle-Ax has got her divorce," he announced, referring thus affectionately to his wife.

"Well," said the girl, "that's good news—for her—if it's true."

Crumb frowned.

"It's good news for you," he said. "It means that I can marry you now."

The girl leaned back on the piano bench and laughed aloud. It was not a pleasant laugh. She laughed until the tears rolled down her cheeks.

"What is there funny about that?" growled the man. "It would mean a lot to you—respectability, for one thing, and success, for another. The day you become Mrs. Wilson Crumb I'll star you in the greatest picture that was ever made."

"Respectability!" she sneered. "Your name would make me respectable, would it? It would be the insult added to all the injury you have done me. And as for starring—poof!" She snapped her fingers. "I have but one ambition, thanks to you, you dirty hound, and that is snow!" She leaned toward him, her two clenched fists almost shaking in his face. "Give me all the snow I need," she cried, "and the rest of them may have their fame and their laurels!"

He thought he saw his chance then. Turning away with a shrug, he walked to the fireplace and lighted a cigarette.

"Oh, very well!" he said. "If you feel that way about it, all right; but"—he turned suddenly upon her—"you'll have to get out of here and stay out—do you understand? From this day on you can only enter this house as Mrs. Wilson Crumb, and you can rustle your own dope if you don't come back—understand?"

She looked at him through narrowed lids. She reminded him of a tigress about to spring, and he backed away.

"Listen to me," she commanded in slow, level tones. "In the first place, you're lying to me about your wife getting her divorce. I'dhave guessed as much if I hadn't known, for a hop-head can't tell the truth; but I do know. You got a letter from your attorney to-day telling you that your wife still insists not only that she never will divorce you, but that she will never allow you a divorce."

"You mean to say that you opened one of my letters?" he demanded angrily.

"Sure I opened it! I open 'em all—I steam 'em open. What do you expect," she almost screamed, "from the thing you have made of me? Do you expect honor and self-respect, or any other virtue, in a hype?"

"You get out of here!" he cried. "You get out now—this minute!"

She rose from the bench and came and stood quite close to him.

"You'll see that I get all the snow I want, if I go?" she asked.

He laughed nastily.

"You don't ever get another bindle," he replied.

"Wait!" she admonished. "I wasn't through with what I started to say a minute ago. You've been hitting it long enough, Wilson, to know what one of our kind will do to get it. You know that either you or I would sacrifice soul and body if there was no other way. We would lie, or steal, or—murder! Do you get that, Wilson—*murder?* There is just one thing that I won't do, but that one thing is not murder, Wilson. Listen!" She lifted her face close to his and looked him straight in the eyes. "If you ever try to take it away from me, or keep it away from me, Wilson, I shall kill you."

Her tone was cold and unemotional, and because of that, perhaps, the threat seemed very real. The man paled.

"Aw, come!" he cried. "What's the use of our scrapping? I was only kidding, anyway. Run along and take a shot—it 'll make you feel better."

"Yes," she said, "I need one; but don't get it into your head that *I* was kidding. I wasn't. I'd just as lief kill you as not—

the only trouble is that killing's too damned good for you, Wilson!"

She walked toward the bathroom door.

"Oh, by the way," she said, pausing, "Allen called up this afternoon. He's in town, and will be up after dinner. He wants his money."

She entered the bathroom and closed the door. Crumb lighted another cigarette and threw himself into an easy chair, where he sat scowling at a temple dog on a Chinese rug.

The Japanese schoolboy opened a door and announced dinner, and a moment later Gaza joined Crumb in the little dining room. They both smoked throughout the meal, which they scarcely tasted. The girl was vivacious and apparently happy. She seemed to have forgotten the recent scene in the living room. She asked questions about the new picture.

"We're going to commence shooting Monday," he told her. Momentarily he waxed almost enthusiastic. "I'm going to have trouble with that boob author, though," he said. "If they'd kick him off the lot, and give me a little more money, I'd make 'em the greatest picture ever screened!"

Then he relapsed into brooding silence.

"What's the matter?" she asked. "Worrying about Allen?"

"Not exactly," he said. "I'll stall him off again."

"He isn't going to be easy to stall this time," she observed, "if I gathered a correct idea from his line of talk over the phone to-day. I can't see what you've done with all the coin, Wilson."

"You got yours, didn't you?" he growled.

"Sure, I got mine," she answered, "and it's nothing to me what you did with Allen's share; but I'm here to tell you that you've pulled a boner if you've double-crossed him. I'm not much of a character reader, as proved by my erstwhile belief that you were a high-minded gentleman; but it strikes me the veriest boob could see that that man Allen is a bad actor. You'd better look out for him."

"I ain't afraid of him," blustered Crumb.

"No, of course you're not," she agreed sarcastically. "You're a regular little lion-hearted Reginald, Wilson—that's what you are!"

The doorbell rang.

"There he is now," said the girl.

Crumb paled.

"What makes you think he's a bad man?" he asked.

"Look at his face—look at his eyes," she admonished. "Hard? He's got a face like a brickbat."

They rose from the table and entered the living room as the Japanese opened the front door. The caller was Slick Allen. Crumb rushed forward and greeted him effusively.

"Hello, old man!" he cried. "I'm mighty glad to see you. Miss de Lure told me that you had phoned. Can't tell you how delighted I am!"

Allen nodded to the girl, tossed his cap upon a bench near the door, and crossed to the center of the room.

"Won't you sit down, Mr. Allen?" she suggested.

"I ain't got much time," he said, lowering himself into a chair. "I come up here, Crumb, to get some money." His cold, fishy eyes looked straight into Crumb's. "I come to get all the money there is comin' to me. It's a trifle over ten thousand dollars, as I figure it."

"Yes," said Crumb; "that's about it."

"An' I don't want no stallin' this time, either," concluded Allen.

"Stalling!" exclaimed Crumb in a hurt tone. "Who's been stalling?"

"You have."

"Oh, my dear man!" cried Crumb deprecatingly. "You know that in matters of this kind one must be circumspect. There were reasons in the past why it would have been unsafe to transfer so large an amount to you. It might easily have been traced. I was being watched—a fellow even shadowed me to the teller's window in my bank one day. You see how it is? Neither of us can take chances."

"That's all right, too," said Allen; "but I've been taking chances right along, and I ain't been taking them for my health. I been taking them for the coin, and I want that coin—I want it *pronto!*"

"You can most certainly have it," said Crumb.

"All right!" replied Allen, extending a palm. "Fork it over."

"My dear fellow, you don't think that I have it here, do you?" demanded Crumb. "You don't think I keep such an amount as that in my home, I hope!"

"Where is it?"

" In the bank, of course."

" Gimme a check."

" You must be crazy! Suppose either of us was suspected; that check would link us up fine. It would be as bad for you as for me. Nothing doing! I'll get the cash when the bank opens on Monday. That's the very best I can do. If you'd written and let me know you were coming, I could have had it for you."

Allen eyed him for a long minute.

" Very well," he said, at last. " I'll wait till noon Monday."

Crumb breathed an inward sigh of profound relief.

" If you're at the bank Monday morning, at half past ten, you'll get the money," he said. " How's the other stuff going? Sorry I couldn't handle that, but it's too bulky."

" The hootch? It's goin' fine," replied Allen. " Got a young high-blood at the edge of the valley handlin' it—fellow by the name of Evans. He moves thirty-six cases a week. The kid's got a good head on him—worked the whole scheme out himself. Sells the whole batch every week, for cash, to a guy with a big truck. They cover it with hay, and this guy hauls it right into the city in broad daylight, unloads it in a warehouse he's rented, slips each case into a carton labeled somebody or other's soap, and delivers it a case at a time to a bunch of drug stores. This second guy used to be a drug salesman, and he's personally acquainted with every grafter in the business."

As he talked, Allen had been studying the girl's face. She had noticed it before; but she was used to having men stare at her, and thought little of it. Finally he addressed her.

" Do you know, Miss de Lure," he said, " there's something mighty familiar about your face? I noticed it the first time I come here, and I been studyin' over it since. It seems like I'd known you somewhere else, or some one you look a lot like; but I can't quite get it straight in my head. I can't make out where it was, or when, or if it was you or some one else. I'll get it some day, though."

" I don't know," she replied. " I'm sure I never saw you before you came here with Mr. Crumb the first time."

" Well, I don't know, either," replied Allen, scratching his head; " but it's mighty funny." He rose. " I'll be goin'," he said. " See you Monday at the bank—ten thirty sharp, Crumb!"

" Sure, ten thirty sharp," repeated Crumb, rising. " Oh, say, Allen, will you do me a favor? I promised a fellow I'd bring him a bindle of M to-night, and if you'll hand it to him it 'll save me the trip. It's right on your way to the car line. You'll find him in the alley back of the Hollywood Drug Store, just west of Cuyhenga on the south side of Hollywood Boulevard."

" Sure, glad to accommodate," said Allen; " but how'll I know him?"

" He'll be standin' there, and you walk up and ask him the time. If he tells you, and then asks if you can change a five, you'll know he's the guy all right. Then you hand him these two ones and a fifty-cent piece, and he hands you a five-dollar bill. That's all there is to it. Inside these two ones I'll wrap a bindle of M. You can give me the five Monday morning when I see you."

" Slip me the junk," said Allen.

The girl had risen, and was putting on her coat and hat.

" Where are you going—home so early?" asked Crumb.

" Yes," she replied. " I'm tired, and I want to write a letter."

" I thought you lived here," said Allen.

" I'm here nearly all day, but I go home nights," replied the girl.

Slick Allen looked puzzled as he left the bungalow.

" Goin' my way?" he asked of the girl, as they reached the sidewalk.

" No," she replied. " I go in the opposite direction. Good night!"

" Good night!" said Allen, and turned toward Hollywood Boulevard.

Inside the bungalow Crumb was signaling central for a connection.

" Give me the police station on Cuyhenga, near Hollywood," he said. " I haven't time to look up the number. Quick—it's important!"

There was a moment's silence and then:

" Hello! Who is this? Listen! If you want to get a hop-head with the goods on him—right in the act of peddling—send a dick to the back of the Hollywood Drug Store, and have him wait there until a guy comes up and asks him what time it is. Then have the dick tell him and say, ' Can you change a five?' That's the cue for the guy to slip him a bindle of morphine rolled

up in a couple of one-dollar bills. If you don't send a dummy, he'll know what to do next—and you'd better get him there in a hurry. What? No—oh, just a friend."

Wilson Crumb hung up the receiver. There was a grin on his face as he turned away from the instrument.

"It's too bad, Allen, but I'm afraid you won't be at the bank at half past ten on Monday morning!" he said.

XII

As Gaza de Lure entered the house in which she roomed, her landlady came hastily from the living room.

"Is that you, Miss Burke?" she asked. "Here is a telegram that came for you just a few minutes ago. I do hope it's not bad news!"

The girl took the yellow envelope and tore it open. She read the message through very quickly and then again slowly, her brows puckered into a little frown, as if she could not quite understand the meaning of the words she read.

"Your mother ill," the telegram said. "Possibly not serious—doctor thinks best you come—will meet you morning train." It was signed "Custer Pennington."

"I do hope it's not bad news," repeated the landlady.

"My mother is ill. They have sent for me," said the girl. "I wonder if you would be good enough to call up the S. P. and ask the first train I can get that stops at Ganado, while I run upstairs and pack my bag?"

"You poor little dear!" exclaimed the landlady. "I'm so sorry! I'll call right away, and then I'll come up and help you."

A few minutes later she came up to say that the first train left at nine o'clock in the morning. She offered to help pack; but the girl said there was nothing that she could not do herself.

"I must go out first for a few minutes," Gaza told her. "Then I will come back and finish packing the few things that it will be necessary to take."

When the landlady had left, the girl stood staring dully at the black traveling bag that she had brought from the closet and placed on her bed; but she did not see the bag or the few pieces of lingerie that she had taken from her dresser drawers. She saw only the sweet face of her mother, and the dear smile that had always shone there to soothe each childish trouble—the smile that had lighted the girl's dark days, even after she had left home.

For a long time she stood there thinking—trying to realize what it would mean to her if the worst should come. It could make no difference, she realized, except that it might perhaps save her mother from a still greater sorrow. It was the girl who was dead, though the mother did not guess it; she had been dead for many months. This hollow, shaking husk was not Shannon Burke—it was not the thing that the mother had loved. It was almost a sacrilege to take it up there into the clean country and flaunt it in the face of so sacred a thing as mother love.

The girl stepped quickly to a writing desk, and, drawing a key from her vanity case, unlocked it. She took from it a case containing a hypodermic syringe and a few small phials; then she crossed the hall to the bathroom. When she came back, she looked rested and less nervous. She returned the things to the desk, locked it, and ran downstairs.

"I will be back in a few minutes," she called to the landlady. "I shall have to arrange a few things to-night with a friend."

She went directly to the Vista del Paso bungalow. Crumb was surprised and not a little startled as he heard her key in the door. He had a sudden vision of Allen returning, and he went white; but when he saw who it was he was no less surprised, for the girl had never before returned after leaving for the night.

"My gracious!" he exclaimed. "Look who's here!"

She did not return his smile.

"I found a telegram at home," she said, "that necessitates my going away for a few days. I came over to tell you, and to get a little snow to last me until I come back. Where I am going they don't have it, I imagine."

He looked at her through narrowed, suspicious lids.

"You're going to quit me!" he cried accusingly. "That's why you went out with Allen! You can't get away with it. I'll never let you go. Do you hear me? I'll never let you go!"

"Don't be a fool, Wilson," she replied. "My mother is ill, and I have been sent for."

"Your mother? You never told me you had a mother."

"But I have, though I don't care to talk about her to you. She needs me, and I am going."

He was still suspicious.

"Are you telling me the truth? Will you come back?"

"You know I'll come back," she said. "I shall have to," she added with a weary sigh.

"Yes, you'll have to. You can't get along without it. You'll come back all right—I'll see to that!"

"What do you mean?" she asked.

"How much snow you got home?" he demanded.

"You know I keep scarcely any there. I forgot my case to-day—left it in my desk, so I had a little there—a couple of shots, maybe."

"Very well," he said. "I'll give you enough to last a week—then you'll have to come home."

"You say you'll give me enough to last a week?" the girl repeated questioningly. "I'll take what I want—it's as much mine as yours!"

"But you don't get any more than I'm going to give you. I won't have you gone more than a week. I can't live without you—don't you understand? I believe you have a wooden heart, or none at all!"

"Oh," she said, yawning, "you can get some other poor fool to peddle it for you if I don't come back; but I'm coming, never fear. You're as bad as the snow—I hate you both, but I can't live without either of you. I don't feel like quarreling, Wilson. Give me the stuff—enough to last a week, for I'll be home before that."

He went to the bathroom and made a little package up for her.

"Here!" he said, returning to the living room. "That ought to last you a week."

She took it and slipped it into her case.

"Well, good-by," she said, turning toward the door.

"Aren't you going to kiss me good-by?" he asked.

"Have I ever kissed you, since I learned that you had a wife?" she asked.

"No," he admitted; "but you might kiss me good-by now, when you're going away for a whole week."

"Nothing doing, Wilson!" she said with a negative shake of the head. "I'd as lief kiss a Gila monster!"

He made a wry face.

"You're sure candid," he said.

She shrugged her shoulders in a gesture of indifference and moved toward the door.

"I can't make you out, Gaza," he said. "I used to think you loved me, and the Lord knows I certainly love you! You are the only woman I ever really loved. A year ago I believe you would have married me, but now you won't even let me kiss you. Sometimes I think there is some one else. If I thought you loved another man, I'd—I'd—"

"No, you wouldn't. You were going to say that you'd kill me, but you wouldn't. You haven't the nerve of a rabbit. You needn't worry—there isn't any other man, and there never will be. After knowing you I could never respect any man, much less love one of 'em. You're all alike—rotten! And let me tell you something—I never did love you. I liked you at first, before I knew the hideous thing that you had done to me. I would have married you, and I would have made you a good wife, too—you know that. I wish I could believe that you do love me. I know of nothing, Wilson, that would give me more pleasure than to *know* that you loved me madly; but of course you're not capable of loving anything madly, except yourself."

"I do love you, Gaza," he said seriously. "I love you so that I would rather die than live without you."

She cocked her head on one side and eyed him quizzically.

"I hope you do," she told him; "for if it's the truth, I can repay you some measure of the suffering you have caused me. I can be around where you can never get a chance to forget me, or to forget the fact that you want me, but can never have me. You'll see me every day, and every day you will suffer vain regrets for the happiness that might have been yours if you had been a decent, honorable man; but you are not decent, you are not honorable, you are not even a man!"

He tried to laugh derisively, but she saw the slow red creep to his face and knew that she had scored.

"I hope you'll feel better when you come back from your mother's," he said. "You haven't been very good company lately. Oh, by the way, where did you say you are going?"

"I didn't say," she replied.

"Won't you give me your address?" he demanded.

"No."

" But suppose something happens? Suppose I want to get word to you?" Crumb insisted.

" You'll have to wait until I get back," she told him.

" I don't see why you can't tell me where you're going," he grumbled.

" Because there is a part of my life that you and your sort have never entered," she replied. " I would as lief take a physical leper to my mother as a moral one. I cannot even discuss her with you without a feeling that I have besmirched her."

On her face was an expression of unspeakable disgust as she passed through the doorway of the bungalow and closed the door behind her. Wilson Crumb simulated a shudder.

" I sure was a damn fool," he mused. " Gaza would have made the greatest emotional actress the screen has ever known, if I'd given her a chance. I guessed her wrong and played her wrong. She's not like any woman I ever saw before. I should have made her a great success and won her gratitude—that's the way I ought to have played her. Oh, well, what's the difference? She'll come back!"

He rose and went to the bathroom, snuffed half a grain of cocaine, and then collected all the narcotics hidden there and every vestige of contributary evidence of their use by the inmates of the bungalow. Dragging a small table into his bedroom closet, he mounted and opened a trap leading into the air space between the ceiling and the roof. Into this he clambered, carrying the drugs with him.

They were wrapped in a long, thin package, to which a light, strong cord was attached. With this cord he lowered the package into the space between the sheathing and the inner wall, fastening the end of the cord to a nail driven into one of the studs at arm's length below the wall plate.

" There!" he thought, as he clambered back into the closet. " It 'll take some dick to uncover that junk!"

Hidden between plaster and sheathing of the little bungalow was a fortune in narcotics. Only a small fraction of their stock had the two peddlers kept in the bathroom, and Crumb had now removed that, in case Allen should guess that he had been betrayed by his confederate and direct the police to the bungalow, or the police themselves should trace his call and make an investigation on their own account. He realized that he had taken a great risk; but his stratagem had saved him from the deadly menace of Allen's vengeance, at least for the present. The fact that there must ultimately be an accounting with the man he put out of his mind. It would be time enough to meet that contingency when it arose.

As a matter of fact, the police came to the bungalow that very evening; but through no clew obtained from Allen, who, while he had suspicions that were tantamount to conviction, chose to await the time when he might wreak his revenge in his own way. The desk sergeant had traced the call to Crumb, and after the arrest had been made a couple of detective sergeants called upon him. They were quiet, pleasant-spoken men, with an ingratiating way that might have deceived the possessor of a less suspicious brain than Crumb's.

" The lieutenant sent us over to thank you for that tip," said the spokesman. " We got him all right, with the junk on him."

Not for nothing was Wilson Crumb a talented actor. None there was who could better have registered polite and uninterested incomprehension.

" I am afraid," he said, " that I don't quite get you. What tip? What are you talking about?"

" You called up the station, Mr. Crumb. We had central trace the call. There is no use—"

Crumb interrupted him with a gesture. He didn't want the officer to go so far that it might embarrass him to retract.

" Ah!" he exclaimed, a light of understanding illuminating his face. " I believe I have it. What was the message? I think I can explain it."

" We think you can, too," agreed the sergeant, " seein' you phoned the message."

" No, but I didn't," said Crumb, " although I guess it may have come over my phone all right. I'll tell you what I know about it. A car drove up a little while after dinner, and a man came to the door. He was a stranger. He asked if I had a phone, and if he could use it. He said he wanted to phone an important and confidential message to his wife. He emphasized the ' confidential,' and there was nothing for me to do but go in the other room until he was through. He was only a minute or two talking, and then he called

me. He wanted to pay for the use of the phone. I didn't hear what he said over the phone, but I guess that explains the matter. I'll be careful next time a stranger wants to use my phone."

"I would," said the sergeant dryly. "Would you know him if you saw him again?"

"I sure would," said Crumb.

They rose to go.

"Nice little place you have here," remarked one of them, looking around.

"Yes," said Crumb, "it is very comfortable. Wouldn't you like to look it over?"

"No," replied the officer. "Not now—maybe some other time."

Crumb grinned after he had closed the door behind them.

"I wonder," he mused, "if that was a threat or a prophecy!"

A week later Slick Allen was sentenced to a year in the county jail for having morphine in his possession.

XIII

As Shannon Burke alighted from the Southern Pacific train at Ganado, the following morning, a large, middle-aged man in riding clothes approached her.

"Is this Miss Burke?" he asked. "I am Colonel Pennington."

She noted that his face was grave, and it frightened her.

"Tell me about my mother," she said. "How is she?"

He put an arm about the girl's shoulders.

"Come," he said. "Mrs. Pennington is waiting over at the car."

Her question was answered. Numb with dread and suffering, she crossed the station platform with him, the kindly, protecting arm still about her. Beside a closed car a woman was standing. As they approached, she came forward, put her arms about the girl, and kissed her.

Seated in the tonneau between the colonel and Mrs. Pennington, the girl sought to steady herself. She had taken no morphine since the night before, for she had wanted to come to her mother "clean," as she would have expressed it. She realized now that it was a mistake, for she had the sensation of shattered nerves on the verge of collapse. Mastering all her resources, she fought for self-control with an effort that was almost physically noticeable.

"Tell me about it," she said at length, in a low voice.

"It was very sudden," said the colonel. "It was a heart attack. Everything that possibly could be done in so short a time was done. Nothing would have changed the outcome, however. We had Dr. Jones of Los Angeles down—he motored down and arrived here about half an hour before the end. He told us that he could have done nothing."

They were silent for a while as the fast car rolled over the smooth road toward the hills ahead. Presently it slowed down, turned in between orange trees, and stopped before a tiny bungalow a hundred yards from the highway.

"We thought you would want to come here first of all, dear," said Mrs. Pennington. "Afterward we are going to take you home with us."

They accompanied her to the tiny living room, where they introduced her to the housekeeper, and to the nurse, who had remained at Colonel Pennington's request. Then they opened the door of a sunny bedroom, and, closing it after her as she entered, left her alone with her dead.

Beyond the thin panels they could hear her sobbing; but when she emerged fifteen minutes later, though her eyes were red, she was not crying. They thought then that she had marvelous self-control; but could they have known the hideous battle that she was fighting against grief and the insistent craving for morphine, and the raw, taut nerves that would give her no peace, and the shattered will that begged only to be allowed to sleep—could they have known all this, they would have realized that they were witnessing a miracle.

They led her back to the car, where she sat with wide eyes staring straight ahead. She wanted to scream, to tear her clothing, to do anything but sit there quiet and rigid. The short drive to Ganado seemed to the half mad girl to occupy hours. She saw nothing, not even the quiet, restful ranch house as the car swung up the hill and stopped at the north entrance. In her mind's eye was nothing but the face of her dead mother and the little black case in her traveling bag.

The colonel helped her from the car and a sweet-faced young girl came and put her arms about her and kissed her, as Mrs. Pennington had done at the station. In a dazed sort of way Shannon understood that they were telling her the girl's name—that she was a daughter of the Penningtons.

The girl accompanied the visitor to the rooms she was to occupy.

Shannon wished to be alone—she wanted to get at the black case in the traveling bag. Why didn't the girl go away? She wanted to take her by the shoulders and throw her out of the room; yet outwardly she was calm and self-possessed.

Very carefully she turned toward the girl. It required a supreme effort not to tremble, and to keep her voice from rising to a scream.

"Please," she said, "I should like to be alone."

"I understand," said the girl, and left the room, closing the door behind her.

Shannon crept stealthily to the door and turned the key in the lock. Then she wheeled and almost fell upon the traveling bag in her eagerness to get the small black case within it. She was trembling from head to foot, her eyes were wide and staring, and she mumbled to herself as she prepared the white powder and drew the liquid into the syringe.

Momentarily, however, she gathered herself together. For a few seconds she stood looking at the glass and metal instrument in her fingers—beyond it she saw her mother's face.

"I don't want to do it," she sobbed. "I don't want to do it, mother!" Her lower lip quivered, and tears came. "My God, I can't help it!" Almost viciously she plunged the needle beneath her skin. "I didn't want to do it to-day, of all days, with you lying over there all alone—dead!"

She threw herself across the bed and broke into uncontrolled sobbing; but her nerves were relaxed, and the expression of her grief was normal. Finally she sobbed herself to sleep, for she had not slept the night before.

It was afternoon when she awoke, and again she felt the craving for a narcotic. This time she did not fight it. She had lost the battle—why renew it? She bathed and dressed and took another shot before leaving her rooms—a guest suite on the second floor. She descended the stairs, which opened directly into the patio, and almost ran against a tall, broad-shouldered young man in flannel shirt and riding breeches, with boots and spurs. He stepped quickly back.

"Miss Burke, I believe?" he inquired. "I am Custer Pennington."

"Oh, it was you who wired me," she said.

"No—that was my father."

"I am afraid I did not thank him for all his kindness. I must have seemed very ungrateful."

"Oh, no, indeed, Miss Burke," he said, with a quick smile of sympathy. "We all understand, perfectly—you have suffered a severe nervous shock. We just want to help you all we can, and we are sorry that there is so little we can do."

"I think you have done a great deal, already, for a stranger."

"Not a stranger exactly," he hastened to assure her. "We were all so fond of your mother that we feel that her daughter can scarcely be considered a stranger. She was a very lovable woman, Miss Burke—a very fine woman."

Shannon felt tears in her eyes, and turned them away quickly. Very gently he touched her arm.

"Mother heard you moving about in your rooms, and she has gone over to the kitchen to make some tea for you. If you will come with me, I'll show you to the breakfast room. She'll have it ready in a jiffy."

She followed him through the living room and the library to the dining room, beyond which a small breakfast room looked out toward the peaceful hills. Young Pennington opened a door leading from the dining room to the butler's pantry, and called to his mother.

"Miss Burke is down," he said.

The girl turned immediately from the breakfast room and entered the butler's pantry.

"Can't I help, Mrs. Pennington? I don't want you to go to any trouble for me. You have all been so good already!"

Mrs. Pennington laughed.

"Bless your heart, dear, it's no trouble. The water is boiling, and Hannah has made some toast. We were just waiting to ask if you prefer green tea or black."

"Green, if you please," said Shannon, coming into the kitchen.

Custer had followed her, and was leaning against the door frame.

"This is Hannah, Miss Burke," said Mrs. Pennington.

"I am so glad to know you, Hannah," said the girl. "I hope you won't think me a terrible nuisance."

"Hannah's a brick," interposed the

young man. "You can muss around her kitchen all you want, and she never gets mad."

"I'm sure she doesn't," agreed Shannon; "but people who are late to meals *are* a nuisance, and I promise that I shan't be again. I fell asleep."

"You may change your mind about being late to meals when you learn the hour we breakfast," laughed Custer.

"No—I shall be on time."

"You shall stay in bed just as late as you please," said Mrs. Pennington. "You mustn't think of getting up when we do. You need all the rest you can get."

They seemed to take it for granted that Shannon was going to stay with them, instead of going to the little bungalow that had been her mother's—the truest type of hospitality, because, requiring no oral acceptance, it suggested no obligation.

"But I cannot impose on you so much," she said. "After dinner I must go down to—to—"

Mrs. Pennington did not permit her to finish.

"No, dear," she said, quietly but definitely. "You are to stay with us until you return to the city. Colonel Pennington has arranged with the nurse to remain with your mother's housekeeper until after the funeral. Please let us have our way. It will be so much easier for you, and it will let us feel that we have been able to do something for you."

Shannon could not have refused if she had wished to, but she did not wish to. In the quiet ranch house, surrounded by these strong, kindly people, she found a restfulness and a feeling of security that she had not believed she was ever to experience again. She had these thoughts when, under the influence of morphine, her nerves were quieted and her brain clear. After the effects had worn off, she became restless and irritable. She thought of Crumb then, and of the bungalow on the Vista del Paso, with its purple monkeys stenciled over the patio gate. She wanted to be back where she could be free to do as she pleased—free to sink again into the most degrading and abject slavery that human vice has ever devised.

On the first night, after she had gone to her rooms, the Penningtons, gathered in the little family living room, discussed her, as people are wont to discuss a stranger beneath their roof.

"Isn't she radiant?" demanded Eva. "She's the most beautifulest creature I ever saw!"

"She looks much as her mother must have looked at the same age," commented the colonel. "There is a marked family resemblance."

"She *is* beautiful," agreed Mrs. Pennington; "but I venture to say that she is looking her worst right now. She doesn't appear at all well, to me. Her complexion is very sallow, and sometimes there is the strangest expression in her eyes — almost wild. The nervous shock of her mother's death must have been very severe; but she bears up wonderfully, at that, and she is so sweet and appreciative!"

"I sized her up over there in the kitchen to-day," said Custer. "She's the real article. I can always tell by the way people treat a servant whether they are real people or only counterfeit. She was as sweet and natural to Hannah as she is to mother."

"I noticed that," said his mother. "It is one of the hall marks of good breeding; but we could scarcely expect anything else of Mrs. Burke's daughter. I know she must be a fine character."

In the room above them Shannon Burke, with trembling hands and staring eyes, was inserting a slender needle beneath the skin above her hip. In the movies one does not disfigure one's arms or legs.

XIV

THE day of the funeral had come and gone. It had been a very hard one for Shannon. She had determined that on this day, at least, she would not touch the little hypodermic syringe. She owed that much respect to the memory of her mother. And she had fought—God, how she had fought! —with screaming nerves that would not be quiet, with trembling muscles, and with a brain that held but a single thought—morphine, morphine, morphine!

She tried to shut the idea from her mind. She tried to concentrate her thoughts upon the real anguish of her heart. She tried to keep before her a vision of her mother; but her hideous, resistless vice crowded all else from her brain, and the result was that on the way back from the cemetery she collapsed into screaming, incoherent hysteria.

They carried her to her room—Custer Pennington carried her, his father and mother following. When the men had left, Mrs. Pennington and Eva undressed her

and comforted her and put her to bed; but she still screamed and sobbed—frightful, racking sobs, without tears. She was trying to tell them to go away. How she hated them! If they would only go away and leave her! But she could not voice the words she sought to scream at them, and so they stayed and ministered to her as best they could. After a while she lost consciousness, and they thought that she was asleep, and left her.

Perhaps she did sleep, for later, when she opened her eyes, she lay very quiet, and felt rested and almost normal. She knew, though, that she was not entirely awake—that when full wakefulness came the terror would return unless she quickly had recourse to the little needle.

In that brief moment of restfulness she thought quickly and clearly and very fully of what had just happened. She had never had such an experience before. Perhaps she had never fully realized the frightful hold the drug had upon her. She had known that she could not stop—or, at least, she had said that she knew; but whether she had any conception of the pitiful state to which enforced abstinence would reduce her is to be doubted. Now she knew, and she was terribly frightened.

"I must cut it down," she said to herself. "I must have been hitting it up a little too strong. When I get home, I'll let up gradually until I can manage with three or four shots a day."

When she came down to dinner that night, they were all surprised to see her, for they had thought her still asleep. Particularly were they surprised to see no indications of her recent breakdown. How could they know that she had just taken enough morphine to have killed any one of them? She seemed normal and composed, and she tried to infuse a little gayety into her conversation, for she realized that her grief was not theirs. She knew that their kind hearts shared something of her sorrow, but it was selfish to impose her own sadness upon them.

She had been thinking very seriously, had Shannon Burke. The attack of hysteria had jarred her loose, temporarily at least, from the selfish rut that her habit and her hateful life with Crumb had worn for her. She recalled every emotion of the ordeal through which she had passed, even to the thoughts of hate that she had held for those two sweet women at the table with her. How could she have hated them? She hated herself for the thought.

She compared herself with them, and a dull flush mounted to her cheek. She was not fit to remain under the same roof with them, and here she was sitting at their table, a respected guest! What if they should learn of the thing she was? The thought terrified her; and yet she talked on, oftentimes gayly, joining with them in the laughter that was a part of every meal.

She really saw them, that night, as they were. It was the first time that her grief and her selfish vice had permitted her to study them. It was her first understanding glimpse of a family life that was as beautiful as her own life was ugly.

As she compared herself with the women, she compared Crumb with these two men. They might have vices—they were strong men, and few strong men are without vices, she knew—but she was sure they were the vices of strong men, which, by comparison with those of Wilson Crumb, would become virtues. What a pitiful creature Crumb seemed beside these two, with his insignificant mentality and his petty egotism!

Suddenly it came to her, almost as a shock, that she had to leave this beautiful place and go back to the sordid life that she shared with Crumb. Her spirit revolted, but she knew that it must be. She did not belong here—her vice must ever bar her from such men and women as these. The memory of them would haunt her always, making her punishment the more poignant to the day of her death.

That evening she and Colonel Pennington discussed her plans for the future. She had asked him about disposing of the orchard—how she should proceed, and what she might ask for it.

"I should advise you to hold it," he said. "It is going to increase in value tremendously in the next few years. You can easily get some one to work it for you on shares. If you don't want to live on it, Custer and I will be glad to keep an eye on it and see that it is properly cared for; but why don't you stay here? You could really make a very excellent living from it. Besides, Miss Burke, here in the country you can really *live*. You city people don't know what life is."

"There!" said Eva. "Popsy has started. If he had his way, we'd all have to move to the city to escape the maddening

crowd. He'd move the maddening crowd into the country!"

"It may be that Shannon doesn't care for the country," suggested Mrs. Pennington. "There *are* such foolish people," she added, laughing.

"Oh, I would love the country!" exclaimed Shannon.

"Then why don't you stay?" urged the colonel.

"I had never thought of it," she said hesitatingly.

It was indeed a new idea. Of course it was an absolute impossibility, but it was a very pleasant thing to contemplate.

"Possibly Miss Burke has ties in the city that she would not care to break," suggested Custer, noting her hesitation.

Ties in the city! Shackles of iron, rather, she thought bitterly; but, oh, it was such a nice thought! To live here, to see these people daily, perhaps be one of them, to be like them—ah, that would be heaven!

"Yes," she said, "I have ties in the city. I could not remain here, I am afraid, much as I should like to. I—I think I had better sell."

"Rubbish!" exclaimed the colonel. "You'll not sell. You are going to stay here with us until you are thoroughly rested, and then you won't want to sell."

"I wish that I might," she said; "but—"

"But nothing!" interrupted the colonel. "You are not well, and I shan't permit you to leave until those cheeks are the color of Eva's."

He spoke to her as he might have spoken to one of his children. She had never known a father, and it was the first time that any man had talked to her in just that way. It brought the tears to her eyes—tears of happiness, for every woman wants to feel that she belongs to some man—a father, a brother, or a husband—who loves her well enough to order her about for her own good.

"I shall have to think it over," she said. "It means so much to me to have you all want me to stay! Please don't think that I don't want to; but—but—there are so many things to consider, and I want to stay so very, very much!"

"All right," said the colonel. "It's decided—you stay. Now run off to bed, for you're going to ride with us in the morning, and that means that you'll have to be up at half past five."

"But I can't ride," she said. "I don't know how, and I have nothing to wear."

"Eva'll fit you out, and as for not knowing how to ride, you can't learn any younger. Why, I've taught half the children in the foothills to ride a horse, and a lot of the grown-ups. What I can't teach you Cus and Eva can. You're going to start in to-morrow, my little girl, and learn how to live. Nobody who has simply survived the counterfeit life of the city knows anything about living. You wait—we'll show you!"

She smiled up into his face.

"I suppose I shall have to mind you," she said. "I imagine every one does."

Seated in an easy chair in her bedroom, she stared at the opposite wall. The craving that she was seldom without was growing in intensity, for she had been without morphine since before dinner. She got up, unlocked her bag, and took out the little black case. She opened it, and counted the powders remaining. She had used half her supply—she could stay but three or four days longer at the outside; and the colonel wanted her to stay until her cheeks were like Eva's!

She rose and looked in the mirror. How sallow she was! Something—she did not know what—had kept her from using rouge here. During the first days of her grief she had not even thought of it, and then, after that evening at dinner, she knew that she could not use it here. It was a make-believe, a sham, which didn't harmonize with these people or the life they led—a clean, real life, in which any form of insincerity had no place. She knew that they were broad people, both cultured and traveled, and so she could not understand why it was that she felt that the harmless vanity of rouge might be distasteful to them. Indeed, she guessed that it would not. It was something fine in herself, long suppressed, seeking expression.

It was this same thing, perhaps, that had caused her to refuse a cigarette that Custer had offered her after dinner. The act indicated that they were accustomed to having women smoke there, as women nearly everywhere smoke to-day; but she had refused, and she was glad she had, for she noticed that neither Mrs. Pennington nor Eva smoked. Such women didn't have to smoke to be attractive to men. She had smoked in her room several times, for that habit, too, had a strong hold on her; but

she had worked assiduously to remove the telltale stains from her fingers.

"I wonder," she mused, looking at the black case, "if I could get through the night without you! It would give me a few more hours here if I could—a few more hours of life before I go back to *that!*"

Until midnight she fought her battle—a losing battle—tossing and turning in her bed; but she did her best before she gave up in defeat—no, not quite defeat; let us call it compromise, for the dose she took was only half as much as she ordinarily allowed herself. The three-hour fight and the half dose meant a partial victory, for it gained for her, she estimated, an additional six hours.

At a quarter before six she was awakened by a knock on her door. It was already light, and she awoke with mingled surprise that she had slept so well and vague forebodings of the next hour or two, for she was unaccustomed to horses and a little afraid of them.

"Who is it?" she asked, as the knock was repeated.

"Eva. I've brought your riding things."

Shannon rose and opened the door. She was going to take the things from the girl, but the latter bounced into the room, fresh and laughing.

"Come on!" she cried. "I'll help you. Just pile your hair up anyhow—it doesn't matter—this hat 'll cover it. I think these breeches will fit you—we are just about the same size; but I don't know about the boots—they may be a little large. I didn't bring any spurs—papa won't let any one wear spurs until they ride fairly well. You'll have to win your spurs, you see! It's a beautiful morning—just spiffy! Run in and wash up a bit. I'll arrange everything, and you'll be in 'em in a jiffy."

She seized Shannon around the waist and danced off toward the bathroom.

"Don't be long," she admonished, as she returned to the dressing room, from where she laid down a barrage of conversation before the bathroom.

Shannon washed quickly. She was excited at the prospect of the ride. That and the laughing, talking girl in the adjoining room gave her no time to think. Her mind was fully occupied and her nerves were stimulated. For the moment she forgot about morphine, and then it was too late, for Eva had her by the hand and she was being led, almost at a run, down the stairs, through the patio, and out over the edge of the hill down toward the stable.

At first the full-foliaged umbrella trees through which the walk wound concealed the stable and corrals at the foot of the hill, but presently they broke upon her view, and she saw the horses saddled and waiting, and the other members of the family. The colonel and Mrs. Pennington were already mounted. Custer and a stableman held two horses, while the fifth was tied to a ring in the stable wall. It was a pretty picture — the pawing horses, with arched necks, eager to be away; the happy, laughing people in their picturesque and unconventional riding clothes; the new day upon the nearer hills; the haze upon the farther mountains.

"Fine!" cried the colonel, as he saw her coming. "Really never thought you'd do it! I'll wager this is the earliest you have been up in many a day. 'Barbarous hour'—that's what you're saying. Why, when my cousin was on here from New York, he was really shocked—said it wasn't decent. Come along—we're late this morning. You'll ride Baldy—Custer 'll help you up."

She stepped to the mounting block as the young man led the dancing Baldy close beside it.

"Ever ridden much?" he asked.

"Never in my life."

"Take the reins in your left hand—so. Like this—left-hand rein coming in under your little finger, the other between your first and second fingers, and the bight out between your first finger and thumb—there, that's it. Face your horse, put your left hand on the horn, and your right hand on the cantle—this is the cantle back here. That's the ticket! Now put your left foot in the stirrup and stand erect—no, don't lean forward over the saddle—good! Swing your right leg, knee bent, over the cantle, at the same time lifting your right hand. When you come down, ease yourself into the saddle by closing on the horse with your knees — that takes the jar off both of you. Ride with a light rein. If you want him to slow down or stop, pull him in—don't jerk."

He was holding Baldy close to the bit as he helped her and explained. He saw that her right foot found the stirrup, and that she had the reins properly gathered, and then he released the animal. Immediately Baldy began to curvet, raising both fore feet simultaneously, and, as they were com-

ing down, raising his hind feet together, so that all four were off the ground at once.

Shannon was terrified. Why had they put her on a bucking horse? They knew she couldn't ride. It was cruel!

But she sat there with tight-pressed lips and uttered no sound. She recalled every word that Custer had said to her, and she did not jerk, though some almost irresistible power urged her to. She just pulled, and as she pulled she glanced about to see if they were rushing to her rescue. Great was her surprise when she discovered that no one was paying much attention to her or to the mad actions of her terrifying mount.

Suddenly it dawned upon her that she had neither fallen off nor come near falling off. She had not even lost a stirrup. As a matter of fact, the motion was not even uncomfortable. It was enjoyable, and she was in about as much danger of being thrown as she would have been from a rocking chair as violently self-agitated. She laughed then, and in the instant all fear left her.

She saw Eva mount from the ground, and noted that the stableman was not even permitted to hold her restive horse, much less to assist her in any other way. Custer swung to the saddle with the ease of long habitude. The colonel reined to her side.

"We'll let them go ahead," he said, "and I'll give you your first lesson. Then I'll turn you over to Custer—he and Eva can put on the finishing touches."

"He wants to see that you're started right," called the younger man, laughing.

"Popsy just wants to add another feather to his cap," said Eva. "Some day he'll 'point with pride' and say, 'Look at her ride! I gave her her first lesson.'"

"Here come Mrs. Evans and Guy!"

As Mrs. Pennington spoke, they saw two horses rounding the foot of the hill at a brisk canter, their riders waving a cheery long-distance greeting.

That first morning ride with the Penningtons and their friends was an event in the life of Shannon Burke that assumed the proportions of an adventure. The novelty, the thrill, the excitement, filled her every moment. The dancing horse beneath her seemed to impart to her a full measure of its buoyant life. The gay laughter of her companions, the easy fellowship of young and old, the generous sympathy that made her one of them, gave her but another glimpse of the possibilities for happiness that requires no artificial stimulus.

She loved the hills. She loved the little trail winding through the leafy tunnel of a cool barranco. She loved the thrill of the shelving hillside where the trail clung precariously in its ascent toward some low summit. She tingled with new life and a new joy as they broke into a gallop along a grassy ridge.

Custer, in the lead, reined in, raising his hand in signal for them all to stop.

"Look, Miss Burke," he said, pointing toward a near hillside. "There's a coyote. Thought maybe you'd never seen one on his native heath."

"Shoot it! Shoot it!" cried Eva. "You poor boob, why don't you shoot it?"

"Baldy's gun shy," he explained.

"Oh!" said Eva. "Yes, of course—I forgot."

"One of the things you do best," returned Custer loftily.

"I was just going to say that you were not a boob at all, but now I won't!"

Shannon watched the gray, wolfish animal turn and trot off dejectedly until it disappeared among the brush; but she was not thinking of the coyote. She was considering the thoughtfulness of a man who could remember to forego a fair shot at a wild animal because one of the horses in his party was gun shy, and was ridden by a woman unaccustomed to riding. She wondered if this was an index to young Pennington's character—so different from the men she had known. It bespoke a general attitude toward women with which she was unfamiliar—a protective instinct that was chiefly noticeable in the average city man by its absence.

Interspersed with snatches of conversation and intervening silences were occasional admonitions directed at her by the colonel, instructing her to keep her feet parallel to the horse's sides, not to lean forward, to keep her elbows down and her left forearm horizontal.

"I never knew there was so much to riding!" she exclaimed, laughingly. "I thought you just got on a horse and rode, and that was all there was to it."

"That *is* all there is to it to most of the people you see riding rented horses around Los Angeles," Colonel Pennington told her. "It is all there can ever be to the great majority of people anywhere. Horseman-

ship is inherent in some; by others it can never be acquired."

"Like dancing," suggested Eva.

"And thinking," said Custer. "Lots of people can go through the motions of riding, or dancing, or thinking, without ever achieving any one of them."

"I can't even go through the motions of riding," said Shannon ruefully.

"All you need is practice," said the colonel. "I can tell a born rider in half an hour, even if he's never been on a horse before in his life. You're one."

"I'm afraid you're making fun of me. The saddle keeps coming up and hitting me, and I never see any of you move from yours."

Guy Evans was riding close to her.

"No, he's not making fun of you," he whispered, leaning closer to Shannon. "The colonel has paid you one of the greatest compliments in his power to bestow. He always judges people first by their morals and then by their horsemanship; but if they are good horsemen, he can make generous allowance for minor lapses in their morals."

They both laughed.

"He's a dear, isn't he?" said the girl.

"He and Custer are the finest men I ever knew," replied the boy eagerly.

That ride ended in a rushing gallop along a quarter mile of straight road leading to the stables, where they dismounted, flushed, breathless, and laughing. As they walked up the winding concrete walk toward the house, Shannon Burke was tired, lame, and happy. She had adventured into a new world and found it good.

"Come into my room and wash," said Eva, as they entered the patio. "We're late for breakfast now, and we all like to sit down together."

For just an instant, and for the first time that morning, Shannon thought of the hypodermic needle in its black case upstairs. She hesitated, and then resolutely turned into Eva's room.

(*To be continued in the August number of* MUNSEY'S MAGAZINE)

TO PHYLLIDA IN THE CITY

SWEETHEART toiling in the city,
Brave and gay as you are pretty,
Would that you were here with me
Underneath this pleasant tree,
And that you, as well as I,
Looked up at the country sky,
Listening to the running stream
In an idle, happy dream!
If we only could change places,
Loveliest of lovely faces—
I sit at your desk for you
And all your dreary taskwork do,
You sit here and dream for me—
That were as it ought to be.
And I know another thing—
Sweeter songs than I can sing
You would sing beside our stream,
Dream far better than I dream.
Your work to me would seem but play,
Because you do it every day;
For I'd dip my pen and think
'Twas your own dear pen and ink;
Everything I touched your own—
Paper, desk, and telephone.
When it rang, I'd say: "Just here
She pressed her rose-red lips, the dear!"
Perhaps within your desk I'd find
A powder puff you'd left behind!

Nicholas Breton